

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UK, EI

SUBJECT: HEATH REMARKS ON ULSTER INTEGRATION INTO UK
CAUSE CONFUSION

REF: BELFAST 143

SUMMARY: CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AND PERPLEXITY HAVE BEEN CAUSE BY PM HEATH'S SEPTEMBER 17 STATEMENT TO REPORTERS THAT IT MIGHT PROVE NECESSARY TO RETURN TO DIRECT RULE OF NORTHERN IRELAND WITH "PROPER INTEGRATION" INTO THE UK IF OTHER POSSIBILITIES TO ACHIEVE A POLITICAL SOLUTION IN NI FAIL. HEATH'S REMARKS HAVE EVOKED CRITICISM FROM OPPOSITION LEADER WILSON AS WELL AS PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT HIS INTENTIONS. A CABINET MINISTER HAS TOLD EMBASSY HE BELIEVES HEATH INTENDED ONLY TO PRESSURE NI PARTIES INTO MORE FORTHCOMING POSTURE, BUT CLEARLY HAD NOT ANTICIPATED OR DESIRED THE RESULTANT REACTION. THIS COULD PROVE TO BE A TROUBLESOME ERROR. END SUMMARY

1. THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC REACTION TO THE
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PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS TO REPORTERS FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH IRISH PM COSGRAVE ON SEPTEMBER 17. IN REPLYING TO QUESTIONS, HEATH APPEARED TO PUT ON FRONT BURNER POSSIBILITY THAT IF CURRENT EFFORTS TO CREATE A

NI ASSEMBLY EXECUTIVE FAILED, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO "INTEGRATE" NI INTO UK. THE "INTEGRATION SOLUTION", WHILE APPEALING TO SOME NI PROTESTANTS IS ANATHEMA TO REPUBLICANS NORTH AND SOUTH AND HAS IN THE PAST BEEN DISCARDED BY BRITISH GOVERNMENTS AS A WORKABLE ANSWER TO NI PROBLEM.

2. AS REPORTED IN PRESS, HEATH RESPONDED TO PRESS QUESTIONS AS FOLLOWS: "IF THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF HAVING AN EXECUTIVE, IF THEY FAIL TO FORM AN EXECUTIVE OR, HAVING FORMED ONE, IT THEN BROKE DOWN, THEN UNDER THE ACT WE RETURN TO DIRECT RULE, AND I THINK IT WOULD BE DIRECT RULE WITH PROPER INTEGRATION. ONE CANNOT GO ON WITH A TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENT UNDER DIRECT RULE." IN RESPONSE TO A FURTHER QUESTION, HEATH CONTINUED "UNDER THE CONSTITUTIONAL ACT, IF IT IS NOT FORMED, THEN WE GO BACK TO RESPONSIBILITY AT WESTMINSTER, WHICH IS DIRECT RULE. I THINK THIS TIME PEOPLE WOULD FEEL THAT WE CANNOT HAVE CONTINUING UNCERTAINTY AND IT IS MUCH BETTER THAT THE WHOLE THING SHOULD BE ARRANGED ON AN INTEGRATED UNITED KINGDOM BASIS. AND THEN WE SHALL BE ABLE TO PRODUCE AN EFFICIENT AND FAIR GOVERNMENT FOR THE WHOLE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM."

3. LABOR'S HAROLD WILSON IMMEDIATELY REACTED BY CRITICIZING HEATH FOR HIS FAILURE TO CONSULT ON WHAT APPEARED TO BE A MAJOR DEPARTURE FROM THE BIPARTISAN POLICY HITHERTO SUPPORTED BY LABOR. HE DEMANDED THAT THE MATTER BE PUT STRAIGHT BY AN UNEQUIVOCAL DECLARATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY INTENTIONS.

4. IN A SPEECH ON SEPTEMBER 18, HEATH ELABORATED SOMEWHAT ON HIS EARLIER REMARKS . "...WE HAVE DETERMINED TO DO ALL WE CAN TO BRING ABOUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE FORMATION OF THE EXECUTIVE AS PROVIDED BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL ACT WHICH THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT PASSED EARLIER THIS YEAR. THIS IS BECAUSE STABILITY AND PEACE CAN COME TO NI ONLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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THROUGH NI INSTITUTIONS WORKED BY THE PEOPLE OF NI THROUGH THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. THEY CANNOT BE PROVIDED FROM OUTSIDE THE ESSENTIAL THING IS THAT THOSE IN NI WHO REALLY WANT TO SHARE POWER AND REALLY WANT TO GOVERN THEMSELVES SHOULD COME TOGETHER. THIS IS WHAT THE PEOPLE OF NI AND THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN WANT AND ARE ENTITLED TO EXPECT FROM ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. THIS HAS BEEN AND WILL REMAIN POLICY OF HMG. IT IS ISSUOLORY TO SUPPOSE THAT THERE ARE NOW POLICIES OR NEW OPTIONS WHICH ENABLE THE PARTIES IN NI TO ESCAPE FROM THIS FUNDAMENTAL REALITY. I HAVE MADE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR IN MY TALKS BOTH AT BELFAST AND AT DUBLIN THAT,

IF AN EXECUTIVE IS NOT FORMED AND FUNCTIONING BY (MARCH) THERE WILL BE A SITUATION OF THE UTMOST GRAVITY. WE CANNOT FALL BACK ON DIRECT RULE AGAIN. IT WAS TOLERATED BY PARLIAMENT AS A TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT, BUT IT IS NOT CONSTITUTIONALLY ACCEPTABLE AS ANYTHING MORE."

5. NOT SURPRISINGLY, PRESS COMMENT ABOUT HEATH STATEMENTS HAS BEEN MARKED BY A CERTAIN BEWILDERMENT AND SOME COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT PUTTING FORWARD THE INTEGRATION IDEA AT THIS TIME WOULD APPEAR TO STRENGTHEN THE POSITION ONLY OF THOSE WHO ARE NOW MOST ANXIOUS TO FRUSTRATE THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO FORM A NI ASSEMBLY EXECUTIVE. EXPRESSING THIS PERPLEXITY, A "TIMES" LEADER OF SEPTEMBER 19, AFTER NOTING THAT "INTEGRATION" WAS ONLY MENTIONED IF ALL OTHER POSSIBILITIES FAILED, SAYS "HE MAY HAVE WISHED TO DUSABUSE ULSTER POLITICIANS OF THE IEDA THAT IF THEY FAIL TO OPERATE THE PRESENT SET OF PROVINCIAL INSTITUTIONS THEY CAN LOOK TO WESTMINSTER TO DEVISE ANOTHER SET WHICH THEY COULD THEN TRY FOR SIZE" SO THAT, IF THEY WANT DELEGATED AUTONOMY, THEY HAD BETTER AGREE TO THE INSTITUTIONS NOW ON OFFER. BUT THIS KIND OF 'LAST CHANCE' THREAT NEEDS TO BE MADE, IF AT ALL, IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE 'OR ELSE' PART OF IT IS, WHILE CONVEYING A SUGGESTION OF DREADFULNESS, LEFT STUDIOUSLY VAGUE. THIS MR. HEATH OMITTED TO DO. BY USING THE WORD 'INTEGRATION' HE APPEARED TO INDICATE WHICH OF THE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES, IN THE EVENT OF FAILURE OF THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION, HIS GOVERNMENT HAS IN MIND."
"...IF THE NEW CONSTITUTION FALLS NEXT MARCH NORTHERN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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IRELAND WILL CONTINUE TO BE GOVERNED FROM WESTMINSTER, AND IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO REGULARIZE LEGISLATIVE AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES (REMOVING THE TAINT OF COLONIAL EMERGENCY) WHILE THE SEARCH CONTINUED FOR A SETTLEMENT MORE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED. IF THAT IS ALL MR. HEATH INTENDED TO SAY, AND TO JUDGE FROM HIS SPEECH LAST NIGHT IT MAY BE, HE EXPRESSED HIMSELF VERY BADLY, AND IN A WAY THAT HAS PARTLY OVERSHADOWED HIS EVIDENTLY USEFUL MEETING WITH MR. COSGROVE THE SAME DAY. HE HAS LEFT IRISH, AND BRITISH, OPINION IN CONFUSION ABOUT HIS INTENTION IN RAISING THE QUESTION OF INTEGRATION IN THIS WAY. HE OWES TO BOTH SOME FURTHER CLARIFICATION."

6. WE HAVE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DUSCUSS HEATH REMARKS WITH A CABINET MINISTER PRIVY TO PM'S THINKING. HIS VIEW WAS THAT PM HAD MADE STATEMENT IN ORDER TO PRESSURE NI POLITICAL PARTIES INTO MOVING AHEAD WITH FORMATION OF ASSEMBLY EXECUTIVE BY A PUBLIC REMINDER OF WHAT SITUATION WOULD BE IF THEY FAILED. THIS MINISTER DID

NOT BELIEVE HEATH EXPECTED CONTROVERSIAL REACTION THAT
HIS REMARKS CAUSED.

7. COMMENT: HEATH'S EFFORTS TO GET SOME POSITIVE ACTION
IN NI COULD BACKFIRE AND PROVE TO BE AN ANNOYING
TACTICAL ERROR. ON THE OTHER HAND, UNPALATABLE AS IT
MAY SEEM TO MANY, HE IS PROBABLY ONLY EXPRESSING HARD
REALITY OF CURRENT SITUATION AS SEEN FROM HIS EXAMINATION
OF AVAILABLE ALTERNATIVES.
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